

FOCUS UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Madrid, Spain

INTEGRATING BUSINESS AND SUSTAINABILITY CAPSTONE

Program Developer: Luis Fernando (Lou) Villalba, PhD., EdD.

Course Code:	MBA-BS 610 (Provisional)
Credits:	3 North American Graduate Credits / Proposed 6 ECTS
Academic Level:	Graduate (Master's / MBA)
Duration:	14 Weeks
Student Workload:	Approximately 150 Hours (42 Guided + 108 Independent)
Delivery Mode:	Madrid-Based, Online, or Blended
Program/Stage:	Master of Business Administration — Concentration: Business and Sustainability / Integrating Capstone — Course 10
Professor:	
Office Hours:	[To be determined]
Contact:	[To be determined]

1. Course Description

This culminating MBA capstone requires students to address a consequential organizational, sector, value-chain, community, or place-based challenge through independent applied research and integrated managerial judgment. It brings together the six-course MBA common trunk with ecological economics, business sustainability, and sustainability reporting and accountability.

Students frame an actionable problem; build an ethical and feasible evidence protocol; integrate strategy, economics, finance, accounting, marketing, operations, supply networks, leadership, people, digital and AI capability, innovation, ecological constraints, stakeholder and rights-holder responsibilities, governance, risk, measurement, and accountability; and compare credible alternatives under uncertainty.

The Week 14 signature assessment is an implementation-ready Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Portfolio, executive presentation, and individual oral defence. The work must demonstrate original graduate-level synthesis while respecting confidentiality, research ethics, professional boundaries, and transparent AI use.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of the six-course MBA common trunk or approved equivalent.

2. Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- LO1. **Frame and investigate** a complex applied business-and-sustainability problem through a decision-focused research question, ethical evidence protocol, appropriate methods, explicit boundaries, and critical evaluation of source quality, uncertainty, and limitations. [Bloom's Level 6: Create]
- LO2. **Integrate** strategy, economics, finance, accounting, marketing, operations, supply networks, entrepreneurship, leadership, people, digital and AI capability, ecological economics, and sustainability evidence into coherent managerial analysis. [Bloom's Level 6: Create]

- LO3. **Evaluate** alternative courses of action using quantitative and qualitative evidence, scenarios, financial and operational feasibility, environmental and social effects, stakeholder and rights-holder consequences, ethics, risk, trade-offs, and residual uncertainty. [Bloom's Level 5: Evaluate]
- LO4. **Design** an accountable implementation, governance, change, measurement, reporting, and adaptive-learning system with roles, resources, controls, safeguards, indicators, thresholds, review, remediation, and stakeholder engagement. [Bloom's Level 6: Create]
- LO5. **Create and defend** an original, evidence-based, implementation-ready capstone recommendation that produces credible business and sustainability value through executive communication, professional artefacts, reflective judgment, and transparent responsible AI use. [Bloom's Level 6: Create]

3. Required Materials

3.1 Main Texts and Open Educational Resource (OER)

- Main Text 1 (OER): Hars, R. (Ed.). (2025). Research skills reader, 2025-2026 edition. University of Groningen. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. <https://opentextbooks.rug.nl/rspremsc/>
- Main Text 2 (OER): Brawley Newlin, A. M., & Bhattacharjee, A. (2024). Social science research: Principles, methods, and practices, Gettysburg College edition. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/oer/17/>

3.2 Supplementary Texts (Non-Open Educational Resources)

- Brinkerhoff, C. (2019). Doing research: A student's guide to finding and using the best sources. CC BY 4.0.
- Selected current research-design, program-evaluation, implementation, strategy, sustainability, systems, and evidence-based management resources.
- All principal OER and authoritative materials assigned in the nine preceding MBA courses.
- Current organizational, sector, community, scientific, financial, market, regulatory, standards, and policy evidence relevant to each approved capstone.

3.3 Open Educational Resources (OER)

- Research Skills Reader 2025-2026 (CC BY-NC-SA): <https://opentextbooks.rug.nl/rspremsc/>
- Social Science Research, Gettysburg College Edition (CC BY-NC-SA): <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/oer/17/>
- Doing Research (CC BY 4.0): <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/doingresearch/>
- CORE Econ open textbooks and data: <https://www.core-econ.org/ebooks/>
- The Sustainable Business Case Book (CC BY-NC-SA): <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/the-sustainable-business-case-book>
- OpenStax Business Ethics (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0): <https://openstax.org/details/books/business-ethics>
- UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting: <https://seea.un.org/>

- Selected authoritative open data, standards, government, intergovernmental, academic, community, and organizational resources relevant to the project.

3.4 Technology Requirements

- Reliable internet connection and Learning Management System access
- Spreadsheet, collaborative-document, reference-management, presentation, project-planning, qualitative or quantitative analysis, mapping, modelling, and data-visualization tools
- Instructor-approved artificial-intelligence, research, analytics, scenario, lifecycle, reporting, and decision-support tools appropriate to the project; multiple commercial subscriptions are not required
- Secure storage, PDF annotation, and video-conferencing capability for evidence review, supervision, sponsor or stakeholder engagement, executive briefings, and oral defence

4. Assessment Structure

The capstone combines Integration and Research Studios, a Problem Framing and Evidence Protocol, an independently completed Integrative Case Midterm Examination, an Options, Feasibility and Impact Gate Review, and the Week 14 Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Portfolio, presentation, and oral defence.

Assessment Component	Type	Weight	Due Date
Capstone Integration & Research Studios	Ongoing	10%	Continuous
Problem Framing & Evidence Protocol	Formative	15%	Week 4
Integrative Case Midterm Examination	Summative	20%	Week 7
Options, Feasibility & Impact Gate Review	Summative	15%	Week 10
Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Portfolio	Summative	40%	Week 14
TOTAL		100%	

5. Grading Scale

This course uses the American University grading scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	93-100%	Excellent; exceptional achievement
A-	90-92%	Excellent work with minor areas for improvement
B+	87-89%	Very good; above average performance
B	83-86%	Good; solid understanding demonstrated
B-	80-82%	Good work with some areas for improvement
C+	77-79%	Satisfactory; meets basic requirements
C	73-76%	Adequate; acceptable understanding
C-	70-72%	Passing but below average
D	60-69%	Minimum passing; significant improvement needed
F	Below 60%	Failing; does not meet course requirements

6. Course Schedule

Week 1: Capstone Purpose, Integrative Standards, and Challenge Selection

Topics: capstone expectations; MBA integration; consequential challenges; decision clients; business and sustainability value; feasibility; professional boundaries; independence

Readings: Research Skills Reader, research foundations; capstone handbook and program PLOs

Synchronous: challenge-selection, integration-gap, decision-client, and feasibility laboratory

Asynchronous: submit preliminary challenge, decision purpose, and access constraints

Week 2: Problem Framing, Research Questions, Systems, and Boundaries

Topics: problem versus symptom; decision questions; theory of change; systems and causal mapping; organizational and value-chain boundaries; time horizons; units; counterfactuals

Readings: Brawley Newlin and Bhattacharjee, research questions and theory; CORE systems material

Synchronous: problem-tree, system-boundary, causal-assumption, and research-question laboratory

Asynchronous: develop problem frame, system map, research questions, and decision criteria

Week 3: Evidence Strategy, Literature, Data, and Research Ethics

Topics: evidence hierarchy; scholarly and grey literature; primary and secondary data; sampling; measurement; interviews; surveys; observation; privacy; consent; confidentiality; conflicts; data management

Readings: Research Skills Reader; Doing Research; selected ethics guidance

Synchronous: evidence-protocol, source-credibility, method-fit, risk, and ethics review

Asynchronous: build literature map, data plan, access plan, risk register, and ethics safeguards

Week 4: Problem Framing and Evidence Protocol Gate

Topics: decision purpose; scope; literature; methods; evidence quality; data provenance; research ethics; feasibility; limitations; sponsor and stakeholder expectations

Readings: Review approved research-method and domain resources

Synchronous: protocol defence and feasibility challenge

Asynchronous: complete the Problem Framing and Evidence Protocol

Assessment Due: Problem Framing & Evidence Protocol (15%)

Week 5: Integrated MBA Diagnosis

Topics: strategy; economics; industry; customers; finance; accounting; operations; supply networks; organization; leadership; people; risk; governance; technology; AI; entrepreneurship

Readings: Selected resources from MBA common-trunk courses and current project evidence

Synchronous: cross-functional diagnostic and contradictory-evidence laboratory

Asynchronous: develop integrated MBA baseline and root-cause analysis

Week 6: Ecological Economics and Sustainability Diagnosis

Topics: social-ecological systems; throughput; externalities; dependencies; impacts; natural capital; thresholds; stakeholders; rights-holders; material issues; reporting baseline; accountability gaps

Readings: Selected resources from Courses 7-9 and current project evidence

Synchronous: ecological-economic, material-issue, reporting, and accountability integration case

Asynchronous: prepare for the midterm through a comprehensive unfamiliar case

Week 7: Integrative Case Midterm Examination

Topics: independent integration of business functions, ecological economics, sustainability strategy, reporting, governance, evidence, ethics, and implementation

Readings: Review Weeks 1-6 and prior-course integration resources

Synchronous: individual integrative case examination; generative AI is not permitted unless expressly authorized

Asynchronous: post-examination correction and implications for the capstone

Assessment Due: Integrative Case Midterm Examination (20%)

Week 8: Analysis, Models, Scenarios, and Uncertainty

Topics: quantitative and qualitative analysis; financial models; forecasts; scenarios; sensitivity; causal inference limits; triangulation; uncertainty; bias; missing data; robustness

Readings: Brawley Newlin and Bhattacharjee, analysis chapters; project-specific methods

Synchronous: model, scenario, sensitivity, triangulation, and uncertainty laboratory

Asynchronous: complete core analysis and update the evidence and limitations registers

Week 9: Alternatives, Innovation, and Option Design

Topics: business-as-usual; strategic alternatives; innovation; business models; policy and partnership options; design constraints; finance; capabilities; co-benefits; rebound; burden shifting

Readings: Selected strategy, innovation, sustainability, and sector evidence

Synchronous: option-generation, design, viability, and unintended-consequence studio

Asynchronous: develop at least three credible alternatives and an explicit comparison method

Week 10: Options, Feasibility, Impact, and Decision Gate

Topics: decision criteria; financial and operational feasibility; environmental and social outcomes; stakeholder consequences; risk; scenarios; trade-offs; safeguards; residual effects

Readings: Review project evidence and decision-method resources

Synchronous: formal options gate review and executive challenge

Asynchronous: submit Options, Feasibility and Impact Gate Review

Assessment Due: Options, Feasibility & Impact Gate Review (15%)

Week 11: Governance, Implementation, Change, and Just Transition

Topics: operating model; decision rights; ownership; resources; finance; workforce; skills; partnerships; stakeholder engagement; rights-holder safeguards; change; communications; implementation risk

Readings: Selected implementation, change, governance, and just-transition evidence

Synchronous: implementation architecture, role, resource, safeguard, and failure-mode studio

Asynchronous: develop governance, roadmap, resources, change, and engagement plans

Week 12: Measurement, Reporting, Accountability, and Adaptive Learning

Topics: theory of change; outputs, outcomes, impacts; indicators; baselines; targets; thresholds; data and controls; reporting; review; grievance; remedy; evaluation; adaptation

Readings: Selected Course 9 resources and project-specific measurement guidance

Synchronous: measurement, reporting, accountability, review, and adaptation challenge

Asynchronous: complete integrated recommendation, implementation and assurance architecture

Project Milestone Due: Approved recommendation, implementation design, measures, reporting, accountability, and learning system

Week 13: Capstone Synthesis and Executive Communication Studio

Topics: argument coherence; evidence sufficiency; executive writing; visual storytelling; recommendations; decisions requested; limitations; appendices; professional artefacts; oral defence

Readings: Review current authoritative project evidence and capstone requirements

Synchronous: capstone studio, peer challenge, instructor consultation, and defence rehearsal

Asynchronous: complete portfolio, executive presentation, AI Usage Statement, and reflective synthesis

Week 14: Capstone Presentations, Oral Defence, and Program Integration

Topics: integration of all MBA PLOs; independent judgment; business and sustainability value; evidence; implementation; accountability; reflection; professional development

Readings: No new readings; review project evidence, program outcomes, and professional learning

Synchronous: capstone presentations, individual oral defence, peer learning, and program synthesis

Asynchronous: submit final portfolio, evidence and reproducibility files, presentation, AI Usage Statement, and reflection

Assessment Due: Final Project: Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Portfolio (40%)

7. Detailed Assignment Descriptions

7.1 Capstone Integration & Research Studios - 10%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4, CLO5

Description

Students progress through supervised integration, research, analysis, option, implementation, measurement, and communication studios while demonstrating independence, professional conduct, and responsiveness to evidence and critique.

Requirements

- Attend at least 12 of 14 synchronous sessions and participate actively
- Complete problem, evidence, diagnosis, analysis, options, implementation, measurement, reporting, and communication studios
- Maintain a dated decision log, evidence register, methods record, risk register, and reflective journal
- Provide respectful, specific, evidence-based challenge during peer review, gate reviews, and executive briefings
- Follow research ethics, confidentiality, accessibility, professional-boundary, academic-integrity, and AI-disclosure requirements

Participation Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Preparation, Milestones & Engagement (20%)	Consistently prepared; milestones are timely and contributions materially advance capstone quality	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Applied Integration & Research Studios (35%)	Rigorous work integrates evidence, MBA functions, sustainability, and decision needs	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Peer and Professional Contribution (20%)	Evidence-based critique and collaboration materially improve shared work	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Research Ethics, Evidence & AI Conduct (25%)	Exemplary ethics, provenance, confidentiality, accessibility, reflection, and AI transparency	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

7.2 Problem Framing & Evidence Protocol (Formative Assessment 1) - 15%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO1, CLO2, CLO3

Due Date: Week 4

Description

Students produce and defend an approved capstone protocol that establishes the decision problem, research questions, systems and boundaries, literature and data strategy, methods, ethics, feasibility, and expected professional artefacts.

Requirements

1. Define decision client, problem, symptoms, purpose, research questions, boundaries, horizons, units, criteria, and limitations

2. Build a systems and causal map, literature map, stakeholder and rights-holder map, and preliminary theory of change
3. Specify evidence hierarchy, sources, data, sampling, measures, methods, analysis, triangulation, and quality checks
4. Address consent, privacy, confidentiality, conflicts, vulnerable groups, data security, permissions, professional boundaries, and feasibility
5. Provide milestones, risks, mitigations, sponsor or stakeholder protocol, and complete AI Usage Statement

Total Length: 2,000-2,500 words plus system map, literature map, methods matrix, ethics and risk register, timeline, and source record

Format: APA 7 professional brief with auditable exhibits; submit PDF and editable source files through the LMS

Problem Framing & Evidence Protocol Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Decision Problem, Questions & Boundaries (20%)	Precise decision client, problem, system, questions, scope, criteria, and limitations	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Literature, Evidence & Methods (25%)	Critical literature, sources, data, measures, methods, triangulation, and quality checks fit the decision	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Systems, Stakeholders & Theory of Change (20%)	Causal logic, stakeholders, rights-holders, assumptions, power, and expected outcomes are explicit	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Ethics, Feasibility & Risk (25%)	Consent, privacy, confidentiality, permissions, access, risks, mitigations, and milestones are robust	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Communication & AI Transparency (10%)	Decision-ready, cited, calibrated, accessible, reproducible, and fully documented	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

7.3 Integrative Case Midterm Examination (Summative Assessment 1) - 20%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO1, CLO2, CLO3, CLO4

Due Date: Week 7

Description

The individual examination uses an unfamiliar applied case to assess independent integration of the principal MBA business functions with ecological economics, sustainability strategy, reporting, governance, risk, ethics, evidence, and implementation.

Requirements

1. Frame the decision problem, system, boundaries, stakeholders, evidence needs, assumptions, and limitations
2. Integrate strategy, economics, finance, accounting, marketing, operations, people, technology, AI, innovation, risk, and governance
3. Analyze ecological constraints, impacts, dependencies, externalities, material issues, rights-holders, reporting, and accountability
4. Compare alternatives using financial, operational, environmental, social, ethical, scenario, sensitivity, and feasibility evidence
5. Recommend and defend implementation, governance, safeguards, measures, reporting, review, and adaptation

Format: 120-minute examination with applied short answers, evidence interpretation, analytical work, and an integrated decision case

Conditions: Individual work; approved reference sheet and calculator permitted; generative AI not permitted

Integrative Case Midterm Examination Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Problem Framing & Evidence Judgment (20%)	Decision, system, evidence, assumptions, uncertainty, and limitations are rigorous	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Integrated MBA Analysis (25%)	Business functions, technology, innovation, governance, and risk are coherently integrated	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Ecological Economics & Sustainability Analysis (20%)	Constraints, impacts, dependencies, externalities, stakeholders, reporting, and accountability are integrated	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Alternatives, Feasibility & Ethics (20%)	Financial, operational, environmental, social, scenario, trade-off, and safeguard analysis is sound	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Recommendation & Communication (15%)	Coherent implementation-ready response is concise and convincingly defended	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

7.4 Options, Feasibility & Impact Gate Review (Summative Assessment 2) - 15%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: CLO2, CLO3, CLO4

Due Date: Week 10

Description

Students submit and defend a formal decision-gate package comparing credible alternatives and demonstrating that the preferred direction is feasible, evidence-based, responsible, and suitable for full implementation design.

Assignment Focus

The gate review must make uncertainty, assumptions, values, data limitations, scenario dependence, trade-offs, and reasons for rejecting alternatives visible to decision-makers.

Requirements

1. Decision context, baseline, boundary, criteria, stakeholders, rights-holders, constraints, and evidence quality
2. At least three alternatives including business-as-usual, with strategy, operating model, financial logic, and implementation dependencies
3. Financial, market, operational, technological, workforce, ecological, social, governance, and distributional analysis
4. Scenarios, sensitivity, risk, uncertainty, feasibility, rebound, burden shifting, safeguards, and residual effects
5. Preferred direction, decisions requested, conditions, no-regret actions, further evidence, ownership, and next gate
6. Complete source, data, model, assumption, scenario, decision, limitation, safe-disclosure, and AI Usage Statement records

Total Length: 2,000-2,500-word gate-review memorandum plus option matrix, models, scenarios, impact analysis, risk register, and decision record

Format: Professional decision memorandum, auditable exhibits, and 5-7 minute individual review; submit through the LMS

Options, Feasibility & Impact Gate Review Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Decision Context & Evidence Quality (10%)	Problem, baseline, criteria, affected groups, constraints, and evidence quality are precise	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Alternative Design & MBA Integration (20%)	Credible alternatives integrate strategy, business functions, technology, innovation, and dependencies	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Financial, Operational & Sustainability Analysis (20%)	Viability and business, environmental, social, governance, and distributional outcomes are rigorous	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Scenarios, Risk, Uncertainty & Ethics (20%)	Sensitivity, assumptions, trade-offs, safeguards, rebound, burden shifting, and residual risk are transparent	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Gate Recommendation & Conditions (20%)	Preferred direction, decisions, conditions, ownership, next evidence, and no-regret actions are compelling	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Evidence, Models & AI Transparency (10%)	Sources, models, assumptions, decisions, limitations, and AI use are verified and auditable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

8. Final Project: Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Portfolio (Summative Assessment 3) - 40%

Learning Outcomes Addressed: All course learning outcomes (CLO1-CLO5)

8.1 Project Overview

The final project is the signature assessment of the MBA concentration. Students deliver and defend an original, implementation-ready solution supported by independent applied research and explicit integration of all six MBA program learning outcomes.

8.2 Project Scope

Each student completes an approved organizational, sector, value-chain, community, or place-based project with sufficient lawful evidence and access. Confidential projects require approved handling; academic work must not claim regulated professional authority.

8.3 Deliverables

Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Report (5,000-6,500 words, excluding appendices)

1. Executive Decision Brief: problem, evidence, alternatives, recommendation, value, impacts, risks, decisions requested, and limitations
2. Problem and Evidence Foundation: system, boundaries, research questions, literature, data, methods, ethics, quality, uncertainty, and limitations
3. Integrated MBA Diagnosis: strategy, economics, finance, accounting, markets, operations, value chains, people, leadership, technology, AI, innovation, governance, and risk
4. Ecological-Economic and Sustainability Diagnosis: throughput, dependencies, impacts, externalities, thresholds, stakeholders, rights-holders, material issues, reporting baseline, and accountability
5. Alternatives and Decision Analysis: models, scenarios, financial and operational feasibility, environmental and social effects, ethics, trade-offs, safeguards, sensitivity, and residual uncertainty
6. Recommendation and Value Design: target state, business model, innovation, partnerships, benefits, costs, outcomes, theory of change, and conditions for success
7. Governance, Implementation and Accountability: roadmap, owners, resources, finance, change, just transition, controls, indicators, reporting, review, grievance, remediation, and adaptation
8. Evidence, Reproducibility and AI Record: dated sources, data and model files, provenance, methods, assumptions, decisions, limitations, independent judgment, reflection, and full disclosure

Executive Presentation and Individual Oral Defence (12-15 minutes plus 5-10 minutes for questions)

- Present during the Week 14 synchronous session
- 12-15 slides or equivalent executive-ready narrative supported by research, diagnosis, alternatives, financial and impact analysis, roadmap, governance, and measurement evidence
- Respond to questions across all MBA functions, ecological and social consequences, methods, uncertainty, ethics, implementation, accountability, and limitations
- Professional, accessible, and interculturally responsive communication demonstrating independent master's-level synthesis

8.4 Project Timeline & Milestones

Week	Milestone	Deliverable	Weight
Week 9	Scope and Evidence Gate	Approved problem, system, questions, literature, evidence, methods, ethics, feasibility, and PLO plan	Formative feedback
Week 12	Integrated Design Gate	Preferred alternative, implementation architecture, governance, safeguards, measures, reporting, and accountability	Peer/instructor review
Week 13	Complete Draft and Challenge	Complete report, professional artefacts, evidence and reproducibility files, presentation, reflection, and AI record	Instructor feedback
Week 14	Final Presentation and Defence	Final capstone portfolio, executive presentation, and individual oral defence	40% of final grade

8.5 Final Project Grading Rubric

Integrating Business and Sustainability Capstone Portfolio Written/Applied Portfolio (70% of Final Project Grade)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Problem, Research & Evidence Foundation (15%)	Decision-ready problem and rigorous, ethical, triangulated, reproducible evidence support the work	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Integrated MBA Diagnosis (15%)	All principal business functions, technology, innovation, governance, and risk are coherently synthesized	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Ecological-Economic & Sustainability Diagnosis (15%)	Constraints, flows, impacts, dependencies, externalities, stakeholders, material issues, reporting, and accountability are rigorous	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Alternatives, Models & Decision Quality (15%)	Options, finance, operations, scenarios, outcomes, uncertainty, trade-offs, safeguards, and residual effects are compelling	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Recommendation & Sustainable Value Design (15%)	Target state and value logic are original, feasible, responsible, and linked to evidence and success conditions	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Governance, Implementation & Accountability (15%)	Roadmap, owners, resources, change, safeguards, controls, measures, reporting, review, remedy, and adaptation are actionable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Evidence, Limitations, AI & Professional Quality (10%)	Executive-ready, current, reproducible, calibrated, accessible, safe, reflective, and transparently disclosed	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

Executive Presentation and Individual Oral Defence (30% of Final Project Grade)

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Executive Decision Narrative (30%)	Compelling narrative connects problem, evidence, diagnosis, alternatives, recommendation, implementation, and decisions	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Analytical & Professional Artefacts (25%)	Accurate, accessible visuals and artefacts make models, impacts, trade-offs, roadmap, and accountability understandable	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Executive & Intercultural Presence (20%)	Confident, concise, accessible, ethical, and responsive to diverse decision-makers and affected groups	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready
Oral Defence & PLO Mastery (25%)	Responses demonstrate independent mastery across all MBA PLOs, methods, evidence, sustainability, implementation, and limits	Strong, relevant work with minor gaps in evidence, integration, or precision	Adequate work demonstrating minimum competence but limited depth or integration	Incomplete, inaccurate, weakly supported, or not decision-ready

9. Course Learning Outcomes and Assessment Alignment

CLO / Assessment	Labs	Diagnostic	Midterm	Exercise	Final Project
CLO1	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
CLO2	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
CLO3	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
CLO4	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
CLO5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓

Key: ✓ = Addressed | ✓✓ = Primary Direct Evidence

10. Course Policies

10.1 Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance and active participation in synchronous sessions are essential for success in this course. Students are expected to attend all scheduled synchronous sessions with cameras enabled. If you must miss a session, please notify the instructor in advance. More than two unexcused absences may result in a reduced participation grade.

10.2 Late Submission Policy

- Assignments submitted within 24 hours of deadline: 10% penalty
- Assignments submitted 24-48 hours late: 20% penalty
- Assignments submitted more than 48 hours late: not accepted without prior approval
- Extensions may be granted for documented emergencies with advance notice

10.3 Academic Integrity

All work submitted must be your own original work. Plagiarism, including the use of AI-generated content without proper disclosure, is a serious academic offense. All sources must be properly cited. Violations of academic integrity will result in a zero for the assignment and may lead to further disciplinary action.

10.4 AI Usage Policy

Artificial intelligence may support selected discovery, coding, modelling, scenario generation, transcription where authorized, analysis, visualization, drafting, and rehearsal, but students remain accountable for research ethics, lawful data access, every source and method, verification, independent reasoning, authorship, professional boundaries, and all conclusions.

1. **Assessment Conditions:** The Week 7 midterm examination is completed without generative AI unless the instructor expressly authorizes a specific tool or accommodation.
2. **Transparency and Provenance:** Every AI-assisted submission must include an AI Usage Statement identifying tools, purposes, material prompts, outputs used, information supplied, verification steps, limitations, and substantive human revisions.
3. **Verification, Current Authority, and Professional Limits:** AI output is not evidence. Students must use dated authoritative sources, verify calculations and claims, distinguish facts from estimates and scenarios, document limitations, and avoid presenting course work as legal, audit, certification, engineering, or other regulated professional advice.
4. **Privacy, Security, Confidentiality, Rights, and Responsible Disclosure:** Sensitive personal, community, employee, customer, supplier, ecological, contractual, proprietary, or security information must not be entered into public AI systems. Students must use lawful access, data minimization, approved storage, safe simulation, rights-holder respect, and responsible disclosure.

10.5 Communication Expectations

The instructor will respond to emails within 48 hours during the work week. For urgent matters, please indicate 'URGENT' in the subject line. Course announcements will be posted on the LMS. Students are expected to check the LMS and their university email daily.

10.6 Accessibility & Accommodations

Focus University Institute is committed to providing equal access to all students. Students requiring accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office and the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations will be made to ensure full participation in all course activities.

10.7 Netiquette Guidelines

Online learning requires respectful, professional communication. When participating in synchronous and asynchronous discussions, please use professional language, be respectful of diverse perspectives, avoid all-caps (which reads as shouting), and provide constructive feedback. Remember that cultural differences may affect communication styles.

11. Additional Resources

11.1 Library & Research Support

- Focus University Institute Library: business research methods, strategy, economics, finance, accounting, marketing, operations, leadership, technology, innovation, ecological economics, sustainability, reporting, governance, policy, and implementation databases
- Research Librarian consultations are available for authoritative academic, regulatory, standards, statistical, organizational, community, and methodological evidence.

11.2 Writing & Academic Support

- Writing and Learning Support: graduate research design, literature review, qualitative and quantitative methods, modelling, evidence synthesis, executive writing, project planning, visualization, presentation, and oral-defence consultations
- APA Citation Guide: Purdue OWL (<https://owl.purdue.edu/>)

11.3 Technical Support

- IT Help Desk: LMS, reference management, spreadsheet, qualitative and quantitative analysis, secure storage, project planning, mapping, modelling, visualization, presentation, accessibility, and approved-tool support
- Source verification, data-provenance, safe-disclosure, accessibility, reproducibility, and AI Usage Statement tutorials are available in the course Getting Started module.

11.4 Professional Development

- Authoritative resources from all preceding MBA courses plus current academic, government, intergovernmental, standards, scientific, market, and jurisdictional sources
- Organization, sector, value-chain, community, and rights-holder evidence used with lawful access, permission, context, confidentiality, and responsible disclosure
- Research Skills Reader, Social Science Research, Doing Research, CORE Econ, OpenStax, and other instructor-approved OER supporting applied research and integration

11.5 Suggested Bibliography (APA 7)

Brawley Newlin, A. M., & Bhattacharjee, A. (2024). Social science research: Principles, methods, and practices, Gettysburg College edition. <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/oer/17/>

Brinkerhoff, C. (2019). Doing research: A student's guide to finding and using the best sources. <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/doingresearch/>

CORE Econ. (n.d.). Open-access economics e-books. <https://www.core-econ.org/ebooks/>

Hars, R. (Ed.). (2025). Research skills reader, 2025-2026 edition. <https://opentextbooks.rug.nl/rspremsc/>

Patton, M. Q. (2011). Developmental evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use. Guilford Press.

Rousseau, D. M. (Ed.). (2012). The Oxford handbook of evidence-based management. Oxford University Press.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). Research methods for business students (9th ed.). Pearson.

United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

United Nations, European Commission, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Monetary Fund, OECD, & World Bank. (2021). System of Environmental-Economic Accounting—Ecosystem Accounting. <https://seea.un.org/ecosystem-accounting>

Yin, R. K. (2018). Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.). SAGE.

12. Syllabus Disclaimer

This syllabus represents a plan for the capstone and may be modified based on project feasibility, research ethics, evidence access, stakeholder conditions, standards, laws, technologies, or other material changes. Approval of a topic or project does not authorize access to confidential data or confer professional authority.

Focus University Institute

Madrid, Spain

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